

Public Meeting Participation Policy

TOWN OF ALNA, MAINE

Adopted February 16, 2022

Section 1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish reasonable rules of public participation in Select Board (Board) meetings and to promote the fair, orderly and efficient conduct of the Board's proceedings and affairs. The Board is committed to effective governance. To that end it is our desire that all meetings of the Board operate smoothly, and be conducted in a fashion which promotes order, collegiality, respect, and civility. Therefore, we hereby adopt, and agree to adhere to, the rules and protocols for procedure which follow.

Section 2. Board Process

All Board meetings are open to the public. The Board as a general rule will allow a high degree of public comment from Alna residents and taxpayers, as well as others who desire to come before the Board.

Public comment may be offered regarding topics not on the agenda during the general public comment portion of the Board meeting. Public comment regarding items on the agenda must be offered during the portion of the meeting where that agenda item is addressed.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to open meetings, lead and direct the proceedings, and ensure that decorum and order is maintained at all times. To ensure and allow sufficient comment, discussion and debate among Board members and others in attendance, the Chair is responsible for recognizing those who wish to speak, who must wait to be recognized. To avoid repetition of a position already expressed by members of the public, the Chair may choose to move on to another item on the agenda, or call for action if appropriate.

Topics raised during the general public comment period will generally not be discussed by the Board at that time. Topics that need Board discussion or action may be placed on a future Board agenda.

As each item on the agenda for any Board meeting is brought to the floor for discussion, the Board sponsor of each item shall first present their initial comments for consideration by the public and other Board members. Following this introduction of the issue, the Chair shall allow other Board members to ask the sponsor questions that may help clarify the issue. No debate or discussion of collateral issues shall be permitted. Once the agenda item has been explained by its sponsor and clarified by questioning as provided above, the Chair shall open public comment.

Any Alna resident or taxpayer, or any authorized representative of an organization, resident or taxpayer may address the Board regarding particular agenda items, provided that the speaker follows the rules of public comment described below. If authorized by a majority of the Board, the Chair may allow public comment by any other person who has information regarding the issue or who would be directly impacted by a potential Board decision.

A vote by a majority of the Select Board may close public comment at any time.

After listening to public comment on an agenda item, the Chair will close public comment on that issue. The Board may then discuss and take action on the issue.

Section 3. Public Comment

1. Any person wishing to address the Board shall so signify by raising their hand. After being recognized by the Chair and identifying themselves by stating their full name, he or she may share their comments. When, in the opinion of the Chair, their identity has not been adequately stated for those assembled, the Chair may request further information before permitting the person to speak.
2. Comments shall be limited to three minutes for each speaker during both the general comment period and on each agenda item, unless, in the discretion of the Chair, additional comment would be helpful to the Board.
3. Comments on agenda items must be relevant to the topic being considered.
4. The Chair has the authority to limit repetitive comments in the interest of efficient use of time.
5. All comments shall be directed to the Chair. All comments must be made in a civil and respectful manner. No public comment shall be allowed which has the effect of embarrassing or attacking the character of any individual or Board member.
6. All complaints may be referred to the proper authorities for investigation and tabled for further discussion at a future Board meeting.

If any member of the public ignores these rules or is disruptive, the Chair or a majority of the Board may expel that member of the public from the meeting. If that member of the public refuses to leave the meeting, the Chair or a majority of the Board may ask the Lincoln County Sheriff to remove that member of the public.

A Board member shall not be permitted to speak as a member of the public during any public comment period regarding an agenda item, unless the Board member has recused himself or herself.

Section 4. Separability

This policy shall govern the Board's practices and procedures and is intended to be consistent with town ordinances, town policies and state and federal statutes. Each section of this policy shall be deemed independent of all other sections; if any provision of this policy is determined to be invalid, all other sections shall remain valid and enforceable.

Section 5. Amendments

This policy shall be reviewed and may be amended from time to time as the need arises. All proposed amendments must be placed on an agenda of a regular Board meeting, with Board discussion and an opportunity for public comment provided before any action is taken.